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NOTES ON OLD TESTAMENT HISTORY.

IV. SAUL AND BENJAMIN.

THE ordinary conception of the history of Israel is necessarily founded upon that of the narratives of the Old Testament, and these, in their turn, naturally give expression to the views that prevailed at the time when the several sources were first written down, or when some compiler fitted them into his framework. But there is a fundamental difference between objective and subjective history, between the actual course of the events themselves and the representation of those events from the pen of the historical writer, and it is the work of literary criticism in conjunction with historical criticism to investigate the character of the sources and to test them in the light of history. It is evident that both must be combined. We may find an approximate date for a narrative, psalm, or prophecy by considering the internal evidence in its relation to the historical situation at a certain specified period, but unless we are in a position to conclude that our historical sources for that period are trustworthy, the results must be somewhat provisional. It is necessary to lay particular emphasis upon the claims of historical criticism, since it forces us now and again to reconsider the results of literary criticism, and at times to qualify and correct them. Historical connexion or the continuity of history, upon which historians naturally lay much weight¹, accordingly compels us to go behind literary critical results; and in view of the character of the material, strict methods of research can only be applied where the literary material is comparatively wealthy.

External witnesses before the period of Old Testament history, in particular the Amarna Letters, present a picture of early Syria and Palestine under certain political conditions, and when every allowance is made for the exceptional circumstances of that age, one is able to gain a faithful impression of internal relations, of the life, and even of the thought of the fifteenth century. Six centuries later the historical material is again comparatively rich, and the Assyrian evidence provides welcome independent testi-

¹ Cp. e. g. Kuenen, "The Critical Method," in the *Modern Review*, 1880, p. 481, *et passim*.

mony for the general situation in the middle of the ninth century (about 860-839 B. C.). With the help of the evidence based upon a critical study of this period, it is possible to estimate more safely the details of the scantier sources for the years which immediately precede and follow. Midway between these two important periods come the beginnings of Hebrew history. Here we are almost entirely without external evidence, and are practically confined to a considerable body of native literature of unequal historical value. The very bulk is overwhelming, and he who has followed the external evidence through the Amarna Letters and the Egyptian data, finds himself suddenly plunged into a new world. The work of literary criticism has successfully disentangled the threads, and enables us to view the whole in its proper perspective. It is the work of historical criticism to determine the historicity of these early traditions. As is well known, it is a matter of dispute at what point to begin the history of the Hebrews—with the patriarchs; the Exodus; the judges; the first kings? Strictly speaking, the history presumably begins where the situation is such that it fits naturally into the course of events regarded as a whole. But in the scantiness of our external evidence, particularly for the twelfth and eleventh centuries, there is hardly sufficient material for our purpose. Hence it is necessary to examine anew the early traditions; to attempt to classify them, and to resolve them, as far as possible, into their constituent elements in the hope of determining the relative position of each in the history of the people.

When it is considered how remote is the period with which the narratives deal, it is proper to ask how far we are entitled to assume that early compilers arranged their material in strict chronological order, and when we realize the rapidity with which tradition springs up or reshapes itself in the East, it is difficult to determine how much confidence can be placed in records, purporting to relate to events of—let us say—the eleventh century, which are preserved in a literary form of the seventh, eighth, or even ninth century B. C. It does not seem justifiable, at all events, to assume that there was a long gap between the earliest written narratives and the considerably later exilic literary activity. Indeed, on the strength of literary criticism, it is evident that we possess a series of records which are obviously earlier than the Deuteronomic standpoint although approximating it. Accordingly, if many of the oldest portions of Samuel are to be regarded as almost—or, for historical purposes, practically—contemporary, we are forced to assume that for a considerable period the work of putting tradition into writing was at a standstill. This does not seem probable.

In the conjectural attempts which have been made in the course of the present series of notes to sift the traditions extending through the books of Judges and Samuel, one definite goal has been kept in view, viz. the oldest traditions of the time of Saul. It was held, that (a) on literary grounds there was support for the belief that the introduction to the oppression of Israel by Ammon and the Philistines (Judges x. 6 sqq.) marked the commencement of a period which ended with Samuel's great victory at Mizpah (1 Sam. vii)¹. These chapters cover the ground from Jephthah to the rise of Saul. (b) On literary grounds, again, it was held that the appendix to Judges (Judges xvii-xxi) was of distinct origin; that the stories of Samuel's youth arose after his life-work, and that the older portions of 1 Sam. i-vii are confined to those narratives which relate to Eli and the ark². (c) The establishment of the monarchy under Saul is marked by literary features analogous to those of the Introduction, in so far that the former contains recognizable secondary tradition (1 Sam. viii, x. 17 sqq., xii) overshadowing the earlier narratives where the figure of Samuel is less idealized. It seemed necessary (d) that for historical criticism the attempt should be made to realize how the history originally read before the late (Deuteronomic) redaction, and the Introduction in an earlier form appeared to imply an earlier account of Saul's accession. From the historical point of view, the stories of Samson could be readily ignored, since with the history of Central Palestine (already detailed in Judges vi-ix) they had no points of contact. But they dealt with a Danite hero and with affrays with Philistines, and thus appeared to have some material connexion with Judges xvii sq., and these in turn appeared to be linked with the older passages in 1 Sam. i-vii. Moreover, their contents appeared on historical grounds to be unsuitable to their context; they broke the continuity of history, and were associated with other cycles of tradition which implied other circumstances and conditions. On these grounds the tradition which had placed them in the days before Saul's accession was regarded as untrustworthy. Literary points of contact between the Introduction and Saul's rise, the impossibility of finding the historical situation which the latter presupposed save in Judges x. 6 sq., and the unsuitability of the intervening narratives thus appeared to point independently to the conclusion that the original object of this Introduction was to prepare the way for the last judge and the first king of Israel. Although

¹ For earlier views regarding the connexion between the chapters of Judges and 1 Sam. in question, see G. F. Moore, *Judges*, 276; H. P. Smith, *Samuel*, 4; K. Budde, *Samuel*, 2.

² See above, pp. 126, 129, 347 sq.

these intervening narratives do not appear to be available for the history of this period, they have a distinct value of their own. History is something more than the bare record of facts, and even the most untrustworthy of accounts is precious material for the study of the development of thought and tradition. Although removed, therefore, they are not altogether rejected, and it is not improbable that room for some of them could be found in certain other cycles of tradition which they both illustrate and supplement.

The importance of observing carefully the literary features of a document as a preparation for its historical criticism is obvious. If, in the study of the history of a certain period, it is found that the narratives are derived from two or more sources, it by no means follows that each separate source represented the same historical background as or was parallel to the others. The critical investigation of the Hexateuch teaches that the attempt must be made to view each separately in the first instance: the mere presence of literary complexity being an indication that *for some reason* an editor or compiler has exchanged one source for another. Naturally, a break in the literary continuity does not necessarily entail a break in the historical continuity; it may happen that the sources will sometimes appear to have traversed the same ground. On the other hand, the whole standpoint may be markedly different, and it may have to be recognized that the two not only cannot belong to the same period, but also cannot reflect the same historical situation. It is at once clear that the later theocratic account of Saul's election cannot be reconciled with the oldest narratives, and this is now very generally admitted; but the exilic standpoint was no sudden growth, it was the outcome of a gradual development which must have left its mark somewhere in tradition, whether oral or written. It is precisely these stages in its growth which seem to account for the accumulation of tradition around Saul and the circumstances attending his rise: the intervening narratives representing the progress of tradition in the intervening centuries between the earliest written narratives and the latest exilic (or rather post-exilic) redaction.

It has been suggested that the traditions which have grown up around Samuel find their analogy in the literary history of the figures of Elijah and Elisha (p. 349 above). Originally, it is possible that Saul rose without the intervention of Samuel¹. There was a tendency in certain circles to magnify the part played by prophetic

¹ Similarly, several critics are of opinion that the account of the anointing of David by Samuel (1 Sam. xvi. 1-13) is a late addition.

or priestly figures in the history of great political events, and considering the immense importance of Saul's period it would not be surprising if tradition, perhaps at a comparatively early stage, associated the rise of the new king with the prophet's activity. The literary evidence is not conclusive, but the following notes will show how far the belief can be justified.

The tradition that Saul's home was in Benjamin is undoubtedly persistent, but it does not enter into the oldest account of his defeat of the Philistines¹; and the story of his deliverance of Jabesh-Gilead (on the analogy of the stories of the judges) might suggest that his home lay near that city. Where Saul's history is intertwined with that of Samuel or David, Benjamin is prominent, but in one noteworthy chapter, where we have an independent narrative of Saul, the indications point to a more northerly centre². Here Israel is at Jezreel (cp. Saul at Endor, xxviii. 7), the Philistines at Shunem and Aphek, and the battle is on Mt. Gilboa. Was Saul's original home in this district? The evidence supplied by his genealogy (ix. 1) is indecisive, and, unfortunately, in addition to its unnatural length, the details are not above suspicion. It was enough to describe David as "a son of Jesse" or Jeroboam as a "son of Nebat"; not until a considerably later date do the genealogies become extensive. Hence it is possible that the fullness of Saul's ancestry is due to conflation. It would be tempting to suppose that the traditional Benjamite origin has been combined with an older—the original one. We learn that Saul was the son of "a man of Benjamin, whose name was Kish, the son of Abiel, the son of Zeror, the son of Bechorath, the son of Aphiah, the son of a Benjamite." Kish might suggest some connexion with Kishon; Zeror (αρεδ, σαρα) might point to Z-r-d—thus suggesting Zeredah³; Bechorath can stand for Bichri, the Benjamite clan, but Lucian's recension read Machir; Aphiah has been emended to "(from) Gibeah," but the LXX αφεκ takes us northwards to Aphek. We can scarcely venture to recover the oldest form of the genealogy from this, but it is clear that for some reason or other the text has suffered, and in its present form indisputably makes Saul of Benjamite origin. But the variant readings and

¹ See above, pp. 122 sqq.

² See above, p. 132. Josiah's tactics in marching north to Megiddo to arrest the progress of Necho can scarcely be cited as an analogy; the historical circumstances are entirely different.

³ The reading Zeredah is not certain (*Encyc. Bibl.*, s.v.). It is not safe, therefore, to associate the name in Saul's genealogy with the home of Jeroboam I (1 Kings xi. 26). But it would be very natural if tradition had held that this king was associated with Saul's home or family.

the state of the text are phenomena which require to be kept in view.

Next, the account of Saul's wanderings in search of the lost asses is again unfortunately indecisive (ch. ix). We are shown Saul and his servant journeying after the lost asses. The search is fruitless, and at length Saul proposes to abandon further attempts. He fears lest his father should grow anxious for their safety, and one could gain the very natural impression that their journey has been a long one (contrast ver. 20). The narrative describes the route in a somewhat remarkable manner (ver. 4): "And they passed through Mount Ephraim, and passed through the land of Shalishah, and did not find [them]; and they passed through the land of Shaalim, and they were not there; and they passed through the land of Benjamin, and did not find them¹": (by this time) they had come to the land of Zuph, and Saul learns that "in this city" there was a man of God who would be able to direct them (ver. 5 sq.). The place-names are lamentably obscure. Shalishah may be the Baal-Shalishah of 2 Kings iv. 42, whence came the man who visited Elisha at Gilgal; Shaalim may suggest the land of Shual (1 Sam. xiii. 17), or Hazar-Shual in South Judah (1 Chron. iv. 28); but it is conceivably an error for Shaalbim near Aijalon and Bethshemesh. The site of Zuph and the identification of "this city" can scarcely be recovered from this passage. It will doubtless be readily admitted that the linguistic character of the verse is noteworthy; the passage has the appearance of being unduly loaded, and it seems safe to assume that it has been revised in favour of some specific tradition. If the present intention of the verse is to bring the scene of the wanderings into close connexion with Saul's traditional home, it is conceivable that the earlier view implied another situation.

Again, when we turn to the account of the homeward journey, the evidence is still elusive. Rachel's sepulchre is to be placed either in the neighbourhood of Bethlehem (Gen. xxxv. 19, xlviii. 7, glosses?), or north of Jerusalem; Zelzah is obviously a corrupt reading, and emendations cannot be of any assistance. The oak of Tabor obviously suggests the north, but, following the prevailing tradition, has been identified with Deborah's tree, between Ramah and Bethel (Judges iv. 5). The question is here complicated by the probability that the successive charges are due to repeated redaction (*J. Q. R.*, 1905, p. 124 sq.), but one may attach some importance to the situation in ver. 3 which implies that Saul on reaching the oak of Tabor would meet messengers on their way to Bethel. Even the name Deborah itself

¹ עָבַר ("pass through," or "cross into"), in the singular, in every case except the third.

suggests a connexion with Daberath at the western foot of Tabor (see G. F. Moore on Judges iv. 5).

We have next to consider where Samuel's home was placed. The genealogy in 1 Sam. i. 1 is exceptionally long and in all probability conflates, and it is quite uncertain whether two views of Samuel's ancestry have been combined¹, or whether some of its members should not belong to the genealogy of Eli who is so abruptly introduced into the narrative. Tradition has placed his home at Ramah, and the name is common enough: Bêt Rima, north-east of Lydda; Râm Allah, nine miles, and er-Râm, four miles north of Jerusalem; a south Judæan site has also been thought possible. But Ramah is said to be Zuphite, and it was in Zuph that Saul found Samuel (ix. 5). Here, unfortunately, the name of the city is not stated (ver. 6), whence it has been conjectured that the narrative implies that Ramah was *not* his city. But it must be admitted that if a scribe could easily delete the original name, it would have been equally easy to add Ramah as a gloss. Zuph has even been identified with Zephath, south of Beersheba, and it has been observed that Samuel's sons were judges in Beersheba (viii. 2); David's flight to the south of Judah, it has been thought, was for the object of being near Samuel, and support for this has been found in the appearance of Samuel near Carmel (south of Hebron) in 1 Sam. xv. The evidence which has been surveyed is hardly strong enough to allow any confident conclusion. There can be no doubt respecting the view which the present traditions would have us take, but considering the character of the texts it is hardly an unfair suggestion that attempts have been made to modify and adjust some earlier tradition. On the analogy of the stories of Elisha, for example, we may hesitate to confine Samuel to one particular home; one cycle of traditions may have placed him in the vicinity of Saul's court; whilst in another the scenes of his activity may have been among the prophetic guilds.

The particular details which have been noticed are extremely complicated, and tantalizing in the possibilities they afford. Leaving these on one side, it is noteworthy that in 1 Sam. ix. 1-14, Saul (of Gibeah?) seems to be ignorant of Samuel (cp. ver. 19), although the whole trend of the traditions in their present form would show that they lived within a few miles of each other. This might be explained away by the view that Saul is here represented as a raw stripling². In

¹ Marquart, *Fundamente israel. u. jüd. Gesch.*, p. 12 sq.

² See above, p. 124. Those who regard the discrepancy as illusory must find Saul's ignorance perplexing.

ix. 15 sqq., the fact that Saul is to come "from the land of Benjamin" (ver. 16) points somewhat forcibly to the view that their homes were remote. If Saul came from Gibeah we might expect his journey to have taken him far away from Benjamite territory; is it safe to assume that the time had been spent in wandering about a comparatively restricted area?¹

These considerations, however, are not of great weight by themselves. But on the strength of one cycle of traditions, it is reasonable to conclude that Jerusalem, if not the district immediately surrounding it, was Jebusite (cp. above, p. 356 sq.), and it does not seem to accord with ordinary probability that Saul's home was at Gibeah, only a few miles to the north. Moreover, when we turn to another cycle of traditions, it is not easy to reconcile the ordinary view with the circumstance that the country was in the greatest distress owing to the Philistines, and that some of the Hebrews had deserted to the enemy, whilst others had taken refuge beyond the Jordan. The state of affairs, already outlined in Judges x. (p. 127 above), demanded prompt action, and leaves no room for aught else. The oldest traditions of Saul knew of a crisis when the people were plunged in the lowest depths of despair, and only those statements can be regarded as appropriate which agree with this situation. Consequently, one has only to endeavour to realize the internal situation to perceive that the narratives in ix. sq. do not bear the impress of being contemporary. The people's hopeless position points to a time when the only security was to be found in flight or in hiding in caverns and holes; the roads were doubtless unsafe for travel, and there were some who may well have been forced to beat out their wheat in wine-presses to save it from the enemy. It was scarcely a time to hunt for lost asses when the land was in the hands of spoilers, and the peaceful picture of the seer and the sacrificial feast ill accord with the disturbances which the sequel presupposes. But Saul gained his magnificent victory through the help of Yahweh; it was no mere feat of arms, but an event of far-reaching consequences for the future of Israel. The circumstances were exceptional, and led to an epoch-making sequel; and whilst the achievements of an Ehud, a Gideon, or a Jephthah are related simply as isolated incidents without further ado, the history of Saul's rise has been built up into its present form by successive stages, in the course of which later ages sought to illustrate its importance in accordance with the beliefs that prevailed².

¹ It is possible that in one form of the tradition it was only Saul's *dôd* who lived at Gibeah (x. 14).

² The growth of Judges vi sq. is partly parallel (see e.g. G. F. Moore's

The attempt to recover the oldest traditions resulted in the view that two leading episodes form the basis of the history of the period : (1) The great victory over the Philistines, and (2) the deliverance of Jabesh-Gilead. Both of them are closely associated with the earlier phases of the "Introduction" and the present history of Jephthah. With the latter we may associate the subsequent events in which Gilead plays a prominent part, whilst in the former the scene is shifted to the southern part of central Palestine, and takes us to a series of traditions with which the history of David is now combined. It is here that we find particular interest in the district of Benjamin.

If Saul is traditionally associated in the closest manner with Benjamin, it is not improbable that it was through him this tribe first attained any prominence¹. It is natural to suppose that the tribes had their own cycles of traditions regarding their heroes, and if the smallest of them all first came into existence under Saul, it is possible, perhaps, to recover one of the motives of the remarkable stories in Judges xix-xxi. Many influences have tended to shape the narrative, and a new one now seems clear. It is evident that when once the theory prevailed that Israel had always been a national confederation of a certain number of tribes, there would be no room for the later origin of Benjamin. It could be, and indeed was said, that the youngest of Jacob's sons was born in Palestine, but the whole trend of tradition from the descent of the children of Israel into Egypt to the invasion of Canaan by the tribes would stand in contradiction to the older view. For the purpose of reconciliation, it might be assumed that at an early date, "when there was no king in Israel," the whole tribe was practically wiped out of existence². It will be noticed that the narrative betrays no friendly feeling towards the tribe, and consequently its details can

analysis in the *Polychrome Bible*). Here one can observe the old story of Gideon's achievement, E's account with its stories of the fleece and the episode of the altar of Baal ; the preliminary account (also by E) of the prophet sent to the Israelites, and finally the Deuteronomic introduction and conclusion, the former preserving some traces of older material.

¹ On Ehud the Benjamite, see *Ency. Bibl.*, s.v., and observe that although the tribe is mentioned in Judges v. 14, the connexion with Hos. v. 8 makes the reference perplexing.

² The historical foundation for the story of the offence of Gibeah is quite obscure. Even in Hosea's time (x. 9) the sin of Benjamin would hardly have been applied to all Israel, who in point of fact justly punished the sinful city.

only be used with great caution; but it implies that the decimated tribe was built up by marriage with the maidens of Shiloh (xxi), and a post-exilic section, which might be based on a sound tradition, has prefaced this by the account of an alliance with Jabesh-Gilead.

Thus outlined, the details are suggestive. The youngest of the tribes after entering Canaan (it scarcely appears in the old stories of the Judges) is practically exterminated, and starts a new lease of life with the influx of fresh blood from Shiloh and Jabesh-Gilead at the very time that the narratives are preparing the way for the rise of Saul. The motive for the extermination of the tribe now seems apparent, and if the account of its reconstruction may be accepted, new light is thrown upon the earliest traditions of Benjamin.

A number of indications have seemed to point to the belief that Saul was originally *not* Benjamite, and since it has been found that part of the work ascribed to Joshua appears to have been based upon traditions of Saul, it is not unlikely that other features in the life of Joshua may prove helpful. If Saul, like Joshua, had come from without, it is not improbable that his obscure relations with the Gibeonites ought to be read more closely in the light of Joshua ix. We are accustomed to assume that for some reason or other Saul entered into a covenant with the Amorites of Canaan, and whilst it is far from easy to explain why the Benjamites of Gibeah found it necessary at this stage of their history to enter into an alliance, it becomes readily intelligible if we suppose that a body of immigrants had newly settled in the district¹. It may be gathered from 2 Sam. iv. 2 sq., Joshua ix. 17, that Beeroth had been effected at the same time, and the murder of Ishbaal may reasonably be regarded as an act of vengeance analogous to that demanded by the Gibeonites².

¹ H. P. Smith, on 2 Sam. xxi. 2, remarks that "such covenants were very common during the process which ended in the establishment of Israel in Canaan." To this it is to be added that they would naturally be made at the earliest opportunity, and not at a comparatively late stage in their traditional history.

² Kennedy (*Century Bible: Samuel*, p. 325 sq.) conjectures that Saul attempted to recover the ark from Kirjath-jearim (leagued with Gibeon and Beeroth in Joshua ix. 17), and rejects Koster's view that 1 Sam. 6 is unhistorical by urging "the antiquity and general credibility" of that source. The argument that very early sources are therefore credible, or that those which appear to be credible are therefore ancient, requires to be supported by other considerations, and Prof. Kennedy himself is obliged to assume that although the Philistines sent the ark from their

Both Beeroth and Gibeon play an important part in the history of Saul's house after the disaster of Mount Gilboa, and if it is to be inferred that they seized the first opportunity of vengeance, the circumstance would seem to point either to the success with which Saul ruled over these people or to a comparatively late date in his lifetime for the occupation of the district.

The old name of Benjamin was Ben-Oni, the latter half of which has been compared with Beth-On (Beth-Aven) to the east of Bethel, near Ai¹. Other comparisons have been made, but this is interesting on account of the associations of the district. According to the story, Jacob had crossed from Gilead to Shechem, and had confines, it "remained within the sphere of their political jurisdiction, and so was inaccessible to the Hebrew authorities." This explanation of Saul's dealings with the league and the attempt to reconcile divergent traditions appear to ignore the plain sense of 1 Sam. vi. The whole chapter would be stultified and its credibility endangered, if it meant that the ark was *not* returned to the Hebrews. What writer, even of the latter half of the tenth century (Kennedy's date) would have described the Philistines' anxiety to rid themselves of the dangerous object, the joy of the men of Beth-shemesh, and the contented return of the Philistine lords, if the sacred ark still remained inaccessible to Israel? But if it be granted that the narrative belongs to an entirely distinct tradition of the fortunes of the ark, one of the great embarrassments of the history of the period disappears; see above, pp. 351 sqq.

¹ The account of the battle of Ai is extremely complicated, and in an earlier stage of the narrative Bethel presumably was more prominent than it is now. The magical effect of Joshua's outstretched javelin is noteworthy (Joshua viii. 18, 26) as also are the precise allusions to his preparations for spending the night (verses 9, 13). When we consider the sacred associations of Bethel and the site between it and Ai, it may not be too bold to conjecture that a theophany in the style of v. 13-15 once found a place here. The vision in question is located at Jericho, but it is possible that the traditions have been confused. The capture of Bethel is ascribed to the Joseph tribes in Judges i. 22 sqq., and one may notice the parallels with the story of the fall of Jericho (especially Joshua ii. 12-14, vi. 23, 25).

In considering the various traditions of Joshua and Saul it is also necessary to bear in mind the possibility that some confusion may have been caused by the existence of several Gilgals (see *Ency. Bibl.*, col. 1730 sqq.). Finally, it has been suggested (p. 123 sq.) that Saul's defeat of the Philistines was concerned with a story of Gilgal, "rolling," (1 Sam. xiv. 33). Tradition has associated with the former the story of a broken vow, and Jonathan's words, "My father has brought trouble (or disaster זכר) upon the land" (ver. 29), recall the story of the naming of Achor after the defeat of Israel at Ai (Joshua vii).

thence turned southwards to Bethel, in which district Rachel died in childbirth¹. Another of the ancestral legends narrates Abram's journey from Haran through Shechem to Bethel (without stating whether the Jordan was crossed), and at a spot between Bethel and Ai the patriarch is said to have pitched his tent and to have built an altar to the name of Yahweh (Gen. xii. 8). The importance of the spot in early tradition is shown further by Joshua viii. 9, and it is interesting to observe that if Joshua commemorated his victory, the account has been omitted by a later compiler in favour of the story of the erection of another altar—at Ebal. There is some reason to believe that according to one tradition Joshua himself crossed the Jordan at a more northerly ford than that in the present account, and that his first step was the occupation of central Palestine. This theory of the invasion of central Canaan is supported partly by the analogy of the story of Jacob, and partly by the book of Joshua itself, whose account of the erection of an altar on Mount Ebal presupposes a conquest which is nowhere narrated. From Deut. xxvii. 1-8, and Joshua viii. 30-ix. 2, it may be inferred that this altar was erected on the day that the Jordan was crossed, and that this event was the signal for the rising of the Canaanites². If Joshua, like Jacob, crossed at the Jabbok, an easy road leads to Shechem, and the arguments of those who support the theory show that there is some room for this tradition by the side of the more familiar one.

Tradition has its own way of recounting history, and it is a curious coincidence that the spot which, in one tradition, enters into the story of conflicts between Israel and the Canaanites, becomes, in another, the place where Abraham and Lot separate. Further, according to P, the theophany at Bethel and the change of Jacob's

¹ Apropos of the change of name in connexion with the birth of Benjamin, it may be noticed that Abram and Sarai receive their new names in a context associated with the birth of Isaac and the blessing of Ishmael. What old tradition underlies P's story of the introduction of circumcision (Gen. xvii, see especially ver. 18) can scarcely be ascertained. It is at least interesting to recall Robertson Smith's view of the connexion between the names Sarah and Israel (*Kinship and Marriage*², p. 30), and to observe the separation of Ishmael and Isaac at the birth of the latter.

² Many motives have been at work in the literary history of the Exodus and Conquest, and among them must be the removal of the body of Joseph. Despite the scanty references (Gen. l. 25 sq., Exod. xiii. 19, Joshua xxiv. 32) in the present texts, this pious duty must have occupied a prominent part in the traditions of the Joseph tribes, the conquest of whose territory (one would imagine) would be recounted at length.

name occurred after he had left Shechem (Gen. xxxv. 6 a, 9-13, 15), and that this view rests upon old tradition appears to follow from Hos. xii. 4. But how this source explained the name Israel cannot be conjectured; it may have given a story of a striving at Bethel or another explanation of its origin. The account of the birth of Benjamin follows immediately, and to this the compiler has appended a notice of Reuben's offence with Bilhah which is distinctly interesting on account of the points of contact between the tribes of Reuben and Benjamin. Unfortunately, only the merest fragment of the episode has survived, and the compiler for some reason proceeds to enumerate the sons of Jacob (P), and adds an Edomite genealogical table in which is preserved a brief account of the separation of Jacob and Esau, singularly akin to the story of Abraham and Lot (xxxvi. 6-8, cp. xiii. 6). What this really means it is very difficult to say, but Professor Hogg has observed that the birth of the tribe in Gen. xxxv. 18 sq. is connected in some way with the disappearance of Rachel¹, which might suggest that Rachel was the old name of the early population of this district. At all events it is interesting to find a recurrence of the same type of names in Benjamin, Judah, and the south².

It is notoriously hazardous to rely solely upon proper names, or even on national traditions themselves, but the evidence for the population of Benjamin is distinctly puzzling, and the fact that legend makes Rachel of Aramaean origin is probably of less significance than the circumstances attending her death. Tradition is wont to build up its diverse elements into a harmonious whole, and it is hardly possible to determine with confidence where the grafting has taken place. Such points of contact as have been noticed appear

¹ *Encyc. Bibl.*, "Benjamin," § 3.

² Thus the name Oni reminds one also of Onan, a son of Judah (Gen. xxxviii. 4), and of Onam, a name in a Jerahmeelite genealogy (1 Chron. ii. 26), and an Edomite clan (Gen. xxxvi. 23). Ono, too, is Benjamite, near Lod (Lydda). With the Benjamite Iri, cp. Iram, Ira, and Iru (Edomite, Judaeans, and Calebite), and with his father Bela (1 Chron. vii. 7) cp. the first king of Edom. Jobab (*ibid.*, viii. 9) is also Arabian and Edomite. See the *Encyc. Bibl.* on these names, also on Shephupham, Shupham, Shuppim (cp. Shepho, Gen. xxxvi. 23, LXX σωφαν); Jeush; Ashbel (cp. perhaps Ashbea, 1 Chron. iv. 21); Naaman (Gen. xlv. 21, cp. Naam of Caleb and Naamah, Joshua xv. 41). Further, compounds of צר are practically South Palestinian, and the element Jeru-, Jeri-, seems to be distinctive of the same district (but note Jeriel in 1 Chron. vii. 2). Many of the names in צר and the majority of animal names also prevail in the south.

to be more than mere coincidences, and the attempt to understand the traditions of Saul with the help of certain of the traditions of Joshua seem to be justified.

The two great achievements which are ascribed to Saul are (*a*) the deliverance of Jabesh-Gilead, and (*b*) the defeat of the Philistines. The former suggests a northerly position for the hero's home, in the latter Gilgal is the starting-point (cp. also in the story of Joshua, x. 6) Two of the patriarchal figures are found moving down from Shechem to Bethel, and a certain spot which owes its sanctity to one of them marks the division of Israel from the Lot tribes, and the overthrow of the older inhabitants of the land by a new race. So, in the story of the other patriarch, a new tribe is born, and whilst one cycle of tradition perhaps associated its growth with Saul, another makes the defeat of the older stock part of the great national epic of the conquest of Canaan. To one, the Philistines appear the most natural enemy, to another, the Canaanites; but they agree that some alliance was made with the earlier inhabitants, and both leave it possible to hold that the movement had come in the first instance from the north or from the east (*a* and *b* above). It might even be conjectured that Saul, like Jacob, was supposed to have come from Gilead, in which case his relations to Jabesh-Gilead find a faint echo in the covenant between Laban and Jacob ¹.

It seems not improbable that we may find in the present life of Saul the same variety of motives that has gone to build up the patriarchal figures. The memory of tribal migrations and feuds, the familiar experiences of daily life, and the personal history of noted ancestors appear to be blended, and the floating elements of tradition have attached themselves now to one and now to another of the ancient names. It would be arbitrary to draw a distinction between the literary and historical criticism of the narratives in Genesis and that of the records in the "Former Prophets," on the ground that the former belong to a pre-historic and the latter to a historic period. There is no reason to suppose that less care was taken in the compilation of the former than in that of the latter, or that the traditions of the great ancestors developed upon lines quite distinct from those of the early judges and kings. Historical criticism, to be consistent, cannot start with any undue presumption in favour of the trustworthiness of narratives relegated to the monarchical period to the detriment of those of the "patriarchal" age or of the book of Chronicles. All have had a complicated history, and it is not difficult to perceive that what has come down to us

¹ Cp. also the story of the bond between Benjamin and Jabesh-Gilead (Judges xxi).

is the result of a long process of selection and rejection. There was a certain amount of material (written and oral) upon which the old historians could draw, and in investigating the use which they have made of it, it is indispensable to remember that their aim was above all a religious one. Their object was to demonstrate the working of the Divine Will, and to adapt the history of the past to the needs of the present—even if it had been their purpose to relate the records of their country simply, they would have suffered from the same limitations as all other ancient historians.

Had the books been written with the sole object of recording the secular history of Israel, it is obvious from the allusions in the book of Kings that there were many noteworthy events which (one might have supposed) would have been eminently suitable for the didactic writers. For example, it would appear from 1 Kings xv. 27, xvi. 15, that at least twice within a quarter of a century there was war with the Philistines in a district in which Judah was vitally interested. It is impossible to say how long it lasted, but it is evident that it must have impressed the districts affected. But the Israelite annals do not state what part Judah played in the events, and the Judæan annals of the contemporary king Asa ignore the war. Even before Omri became king of Israel there was serious internal dissension until the party under Tibni lost their leader. But of this formidable affair tradition seems to have preserved no recollection. It must appear extremely remarkable that such episodes as these which must have lingered in the memory of the people, if they did not actually exist in a written form, have disappeared entirely from the pages of history, whilst, on the other hand, the compilers have handed down stories of internal jealousy and conflict of the days of the Judges and wars with the Philistines of the time of Saul and David.

Hence, in dealing with all historical material which is carried back to such an early period as that now under consideration, it is very important to remind ourselves of what must have transpired in the history of Israel and Judah between the time when certain events were supposed to have taken place, and the time when they were first put into writing. Even subsequent to the latter stage, as the various narratives were gradually reaching their present form, history was not stationary. But, on the one hand, the extent of our historical material from the days of Saul and David onward is comparatively scanty, perhaps one may go so far as to say that it is suspiciously scanty. On the other hand, there are stories relating to the pre-monarchic period which in their present form at least belong to the centuries of the monarchy. In these circumstances, it becomes far

from improbable that narratives dealing with comparatively remote events are coloured by the recollection of those comparatively recent. Thus, there is always the possibility (not to use a stronger word) that even in the older sources relating to the earlier periods, the memory of events still fresh in the mind has coloured the traditions of the past, and it would hardly be safe to assert that the events which have been considered in the course of these notes do not contain some fragments of genuine history subsequent to the days of Saul and David.

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(To be continued.)